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Toyota boss
Latvala
tackles
the MN
questions

Driver-turned-team principal under the spotlight with our posers **P14**



The 2019 WRC champion returns to his roots to set up epic season in prospect

TANAK REJOINS M-SPORT TO LEAD THE LINE IN 2023



Tanak will reprise his role with M-Sport in '23

By Graham Lister

The 2023 World Rally Championship has all the ingredients to be the greatest in a generation after Ott Tanak signed for M-Sport last week.

His deal means all three factory outfits now have proven winners in their ranks, making next season's title battle too close to call.

And by recruiting Tanak to drive its lead Ford Puma Rally1 against the rival Hyundai and Toyota teams, M-Sport head Malcolm Wilson believes his Cumbria firm can return to the top of the sport having notched up just one win since its last title-winning season in 2018.

"From Ott's feedback [already] we are confident we can challenge for the championship in 2023," Wilson said.

Motorsport News first reported rumours of Tanak's M-Sport comeback in October as part of a sensational swap deal with Craig Breen.

The Irish ace struggled to make an impact with the British squad but has secured a return to Hyundai.

Full report, page 8



Tanak to take title?

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THE 20 LANDMARK
MOMENTS OF
WRC HISTORY**



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Tanak will be reunited with the M-Sport team for the 2023 season and has title target

TANAK TEES UP A BELTER FOR 2023

Motorsport News was the first to tell you, but the news is now confirmed. Ott Tanak is on his way for a homecoming with M-Sport to drive its Ford Puma Rally1 in the World Rally Championship next season, while Craig Breen heads in the opposite direction for a part-campaign with Hyundai.

Tanak's increasing frustration at Hyundai in 2022 was one of the major subplots of the season. The South Korean marque has often flattered to deceive at the highest level of global rallying, with reliability problems and some questionable team management. Tanak wasn't going to sit back and let that wash over him. He was succinct and forthright, and this led to a very frosty relationship between him and his paymasters.

Now he is returning to the team that gave him his big break in the WRC and with which he effectively went through the growing pains that made him into a title threat. Toyota was the main beneficiary of that flourishing talent when Tanak took the title in 2019 before the Estonian's switch to Hyundai, presumably lured by the big bucks, has been anything but happy in the last three seasons but it is worth remembering that, despite all of the upset and unrest within the team this season, he still managed to win three rallies and he finished as runner up to Kalle Rovanpera in the race for this year's title.

M-Sport needs a truly top-line driver on a regular basis. There is the feeling that the Puma Rally1 machine is a highly competitive piece of equipment and the results this season haven't really shown that. But for 2023, it will have a success-hungry driver who is out to make a point. This could be a very potent combination and it also means that the top talent in the WRC is spread liberally around the top three teams. That means 2023 could do down as one of the most competitive years in WRC history.

The man who is already scheming a way to topple the opposition once more is Jari-Matti Latvala, the team boss of the Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT. The Finn kindly took time out of his very busy schedule to tackle the MN readers' questions this week, and it is a fascinating insight. The interview starts on page 14.

We also run down the MN list of the 20 most iconic moments in the five-decade history of the World Rally Championship in our special feature that begins on page 20. We have hand-picked a selection of our favourites but, as ever, these things are subjective, and we would love to hear your views. Get in touch and let us know if your favourite is missing from the list.

Matt James

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MOTORSPORT NEWS

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RACING NEWS

SHORTER DRS ZONES MOOTED FOR FORMULA 1 IN 2023 SEASON

Overtaking to be made harder for the next campaign

By Matt James

Formula 1 chiefs are looking to tweak the Drag Reduction System usage in 2023 to make overtaking more difficult.

The system was introduced into grand prix racing in 2011 to assist passing moves, but it is felt that the new ground effect rules that were introduced at the beginning of 2022 have now made overtaking too easy at certain venues.

The FIA's single-seater technical director Nikolas

Tombis told Autosport that one of the ideas under consideration was to reduce the activation zones at some circuits to limit the effect of DRS.

"We don't want overtaking to be, as we say, inevitable or actually easy," he explained. "It still has to be a fight. If it happens too quickly, if you just see a car approaching and then going by and disappearing, it's actually worse than being at the back and fighting. It needs the right balance to be found there." Ross Brawn, who will step

down from his position as Formula 1 managing director at the end of the year, said he too thought that there was room for improvements to the current DRS system.

"I think we shouldn't be afraid to reduce the DRS in places like Monza, because it does seem a bit 'you get on the back of them, press the button, overtake.' It's a bit ritualistic, isn't it?" said Brawn. "It's not very impressive. And so we shouldn't be afraid to reduce the use of DRS where it's clearly proving to be too powerful."



The DRS system is facing an overhaul for 2023



Grosjean has a busy future

GROSJEAN JOINS LAMBORGHINI FOR SPORTSCAR ATTACK

Ex-Formula 1 driver Romain Grosjean has signed to drive for Lamborghini in the World Endurance Championship's hypercar division.

The 36-year-old, who will also return to the IndyCar series in 2023, will begin his relationship with the Italian firm by racing in the GT3 division by joining the Iron Lynx team for Daytona in a Huracan and he will also contest a number of other IMSA races with the squad while also undertaking test work with the new LMDh machine. The LMDh car is due on the WEC grid in 2024. Grosjean joins the already confirmed Mirko Bortolotti and Andrea Caldarelli in the line-up for the top-flight racer.

Grosjean said: "I am very excited about two things: the first is starting in Daytona with the GT3 which has been very successful in Daytona and a really good team like Iron Lynx and team-mates around me, so that is going to be a nice discovery for myself."

"And then, later in the year developing the new LMDh which is a beautiful car - I'm lucky to have seen it - and an incredible project in endurance. It's becoming a very exciting category with all the constructors coming."



Sprint finish: the drivers will get six extra chances to get on a podium

SUPER SIX CHOSEN FOR F1 SPRINT RACES IN 2023

The six venues that will host Formula 1 sprint races in 2023 have been named with Silverstone missing from the list.

The grands prix which will feature a competitive race on the Saturday afternoon are Azerbaijan, Austria, Belgium, Qatar, the USA and Brazil. There will be no change in the points system for the Sprint events - with a reward for the first eight drivers home - although this had been mooted in recent weeks.

"We have seen a hugely positive reaction to the F1 sprint events during the first two years of its running," said F1 president and chief executive officer Stefano Domenicali.

"We can't wait to bring even more action to fans with six events next year,

including our first US F1 sprint in Austin.

"The introduction of the F1 sprint has created a race weekend that includes three days of competitive racing action and brings more entertainment to fans of the sport, as well as additional value for key stakeholders including teams, broadcasters, partners, and host venues."

There have also been adjustments to the level of funding each team is permitted for the Sprint races to keep them in line with the budget cap.

Each squad received a £122,000 allowance in the budget cap per sprint race, as well as a further £81,000 per car for accident damage, which could increase if the cost is greater than £81,000. Teams will be given £244,000 per sprint race weekend from 2023.

ZANDVOORT TO REMAIN ON THE F1 CALENDAR THROUGH TO 2025

Formula 1 heads have agreed a deal for the Dutch Grand Prix to remain on the schedule until at least 2025.

The race has proved hugely popular with fans of the two-time World champion Max Verstappen, and he

will be joined on the grid by a second Dutch racer with Nyck de Vries joining AlphaTauri for 2023.

Formula 1 president and chief executive Stefano Domenicali said: "The Dutch Grand Prix has quickly

established itself on the calendar as a fan favourite, bringing incredible energy and a great fan experience every year.

"The sold-out events in the last two years have raised the bar in terms of organisation, entertainment, and

sustainability, and we are delighted to extend our relationship with them."

A switch in the calendar line-up means that the race will be the first after the summer break. It will take place on August 25-27.



Orange army will be overjoyed

PORTLAND CONFIRMED ON 2022-2023 FORMULA E LINE-UP

Formula E will switch from its USA race from New York to Portland in Oregon for the 2022-2023 season to complete the roster for the campaign.

New York took over as the host city of the Formula E race in the States, having previously hosted rounds in Miami and Long Beach but the venue in Brooklyn is unavailable this year due to renovations. There was a plan to link up with an existing IndyCar race, meeting but that idea was shelved.

The Portland race is the 12th to be added to the line-up, which will feature 16 rounds.

The move was rubber-stamped at the recent World Motor Sports Council meeting, which also confirmed a free practice-only licence for drivers. The move has been made as there is a rule in place for teams to run non-regular drivers in at least two practice sessions in 2022-2023.



The USA round has been forced to move away from NY

CALENDAR

Formula E 2022-2023

DATE	VENUE
Jan 14, 2023	Mexico City, Mexico
Jan 27-28, 2023	Diriyah, Saudi Arabia
Feb 11, 2023	Hyderabad, India
Feb 25, 2023	Cape Town, South Africa
March 25, 2023	Sao Paulo, Brazil
April 22-23, 2023	Berlin, Germany

DATE	VENUE
May 6, 2023	Monaco, Monte Carlo
June 3-4, 2023	Jakarta, Indonesia
June 24, 2023	Portland, Oregon, US
July 15-16, 2023	Rome, Italy
July 29-30, 2023	London, UK

LMP2 DIVISION SET TO LOSE SLOT ON WEC GRID

The LMP2 class in the World Endurance Championship is facing the axe as demand ramps up for places on the Hypercar grid over the next two seasons.

The second tier of sportscar racing is under pressure as the GT divisions have also been reworked to open them up to more manufacturers with a GT3-based focus.

There will be possibly six Hypercar teams on the grid next year, and that could expand by a further three by 2024.

That means that the grids would not be able to feature

all of the existing classes.

Pierre Fillon, president of WEC promoter the Automobile Club de l'Ouest, said: "In terms of quantity, it will be difficult to increase the number of cars as circuits that can accommodate more than 36 or 38 cars are few

and far between.

"The future shape of the WEC will, of course, depend on the success of Hypercar.

"If manufacturers push the grid up to 20 or 25 cars in the top class, there will not be a lot of room left for the others."

LMP2 cars will still race around the world in the Asian contest and in Europe and the USA too.

The ACO has also confirmed that a minimum of 15 LMP2 slots will be reserved on the 2024 grid for Le Mans even if the category is dropped from WEC.



LMP2: days numbered?



Hotchin goes private

HOTCHIN BECOMES FIRST GB4 PRIVATEER

Teenage tin-top racer Dylan Hotchin will in 2023 become the first-ever fully private GB4 championship entry in the single-seater contest's second season.

Lincolnshire 18-year-old Hotchin raced in the British Racing and Sports Car Club's Fiesta Junior championship in 2020 and early '21, before switching to the senior Fiesta contest. He will race in GB4 under the Dylan Hotchin Racing banner.

Hotchin is also an apprentice control and instrument technician and, together with his father Richard, intends to invite fellow trainees from workplace apprenticeships and colleges to join the team at race weekends, with additional guidance from British Steel senior engineers.

Hotchin said: "To do this as a private entry will bring challenges, but GB4 is the only category that will allow me to break into single-seaters in the way we want to do it."

SUSTAINABLE FUEL BENCHMARKS SET

A Mazda has completed a 1000-mile drive around the UK and set a benchmark race circuit lap time in each home nation using sustainable 100% fossil-free fuel.

A completely production standard 184ps 2.0-litre Mazda MX-5 Roadster, using Sustain road fuel from Coryton Fuels, established benchmarks at the Anglesey, Oulton Park, Knockhill and Kirkistown circuits across a week wherein the car also made the 1000-mile journey from circuit to circuit on sustainable petrol. The fuel was created using 100% agricultural waste.

The MX-5's performance was unchanged by the fuel, and excluding the circuit laps it averaged 45.6mpg.

Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers said: "Around 90% of vehicles on UK roads are still powered purely by an internal combustion engine, with many capable of running for many years to come. Sustainable fuels provide a low-carbon fuel alternative to conventional hydrocarbon fuels, ensuring the lifespan of these vehicles is maximised with minimum impact."



Chambers (r) paid tribute

FOSTER CONFIRMED AS 2022 HAYES WINNER

Legend is four-time Walter Hayes Trophy victor after Esterson appeal fails

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Peter Scherer



Foster (l) was elevated to first after Esterson's (c) post-race penalty

By Graham Keillor

Joey Foster has been confirmed as a four-time Walter Hayes Trophy winner after victor-on-the-road Max Esterson's appeal against his post-race penalty in last month's final was rejected.

GB3 race-winner Esterson was first to the chequered flag in the final of the Silverstone event, apparently both

winning his second Hayes in a row and completing a rare double win in Formula Ford's end-of-season events, after winning the Festival two weeks previously.

But after the race Ammonite Motorsport's Esterson got a time penalty, dropping him to fifth, because at half distance Kevin Mills Racing's Tom Mills was edged into the Luffield gravel when trying to pass Esterson for the lead.



Foster paid tribute to his Don Hardman Racing team

The penalty meant Foster, second home in his Don Hardman Racing Firman, was promoted to be the provisional victor. Esterson and his team immediately indicated they would appeal the penalty decision at the National Court, but that appeal was rejected last week. This means Foster keeps the win, his fourth Hayes victory and his first since 2005.

Foster said on Facebook: "It's an odd feeling, and certainly not the way a driver

ever wants to win a race. However, I'm hugely proud of our small team, an enormous amount of effort goes on behind the scenes, as well as at the circuit, and everyone who is part of our clan deserves this result immensely.

"Don, you're a bloody legend. The cars are immaculately prepped each and every time and keep turning in circles without fault in every session with their fast Neil Bold motors."



Fifteen-year-old Sharp is a British F4 title favourite for 2023

SHARP SEEKS BRITISH F4 TITLE WITH CARLIN RETURN

New Zealand rising star Louis Sharp is targeting next year's British Formula 4 title after confirming he will continue in the championship in 2023 with Carlin.

The 15-year-old with Carlin finished fourth in this year's British F4 standings with two wins, despite missing the opening meeting as he had not yet reached the championship's minimum age.

Last month Sharp also won both the end-of-season F4 UAE Trophy races staged alongside Formula 1's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix at the Yas Marina circuit, beating dominant British F4 champion Alex Dunne.

Sharp said: "I'm thrilled to be staying with Carlin after what was an amazing debut season. Coming from New Zealand, it's been a big learning curve but, already, I've learned so much which will help me in the future. I've had a bit of success, too, which is a good progression towards my goal of Formula 1.

"It's great that everything is now sorted as it will give me plenty of time to prepare for the season over the winter. My main aim is to add to what I've achieved so far and, without putting too much pressure on myself, my sights must be on fighting for the British championship title."

TOWNSEND IN TCR SWITCH

Ginetta GT4 Supercup Am racer Garry Townsend is switching to TCR next season, with a Paul Sheard-run Audi.

The former Renault Clio and Mazda MX-5 racer finished fifth in the GT4 Supercup Am standings this year.

"I tried the car at Spa when we picked it up and had 20 laps at Snetterton before trying it at Donington," he said.

Townsend will be joined in the team by former GT4 Supercup rival Joe

Marshall, both cars having previously been raced in Belgium.

Ginetta Junior champion Josh Rowledge also had a run out last week in the Breakell Racing Mercedes GT4 at a frosty Donington Park, under the tutelage of British GT champion Jack Mitchell.

"No decisions yet on next year, but I am looking at options and would like to try some sort of endurance racing," Rowledge said.



Ginetta GT4 Supercup graduate Townsend has tried out TCR Audi

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RACING NEWS

GRAVETT JR JOINS BTCC PROGRAMME

Mini Challenge JCW racer Bradley Gravett, son of 1990 British Touring Car champion Robb, will be a member of champion Excler8 team's development driver programme for 2023's BTCC season.

Gravett joined Excler8 in August, switching from Graves Motorsports to complete the JCW campaign's final two rounds. The 29-year-old, whose aim is to become a BTCC racer, has also confirmed he will complete a full JCW season with Excler8 in 2023.

And alongside his racing programme Gravett will spend time with Excler8's BTCC outfit that took Tom Ingram to this season's title, as well as sample Excler8's BTCC Hyundai i30 Fastback N in an official test.

Gravett said: "Seeing everything that my father achieved in the BTCC, and the challenges he faced in his career as a professional touring car driver, means I realise and understand that if I want to do it myself, I absolutely have to do it properly."

"With that in mind, the opportunity to become a development driver for Excler8's BTCC team is an absolute honour, and the next step towards my dream of competing in the series in the future."



BTCC champ son gets go

CSCC TO HOLD 24-HOUR RACE

The Classic Sports Car Club will run a 24-Hour event for the first time in its 20-year history at Anglesey next July and all CSCC series will take part in the race.

The July 1-2 event will be in a similar format to the Le Mans Classic – that coincidentally takes place on the same weekend – and Classic Daytona 24 Hours, a unique format in the UK.

Daytime qualifying is on Saturday morning and the 24 hours starts at 1400hrs. The 24 hours is split into six series/groups of similar cars running their usual 40-minute pitstop sessions in sequence. This means that no mid-race refuelling is required. Finishing positions and time gained and lost in each 'race' is carried forward to the next session. Night practice takes place when the sun goes down, and thereafter racing continues.

Organisers anticipate entry fees of £725, for one or two drivers. Special Saloons and Modsports drivers are able to compete as a Slicks Series entry. CSCC series registrations opened last week, and entries to the 24-Hour event are due to open in April.

First new
Lambo filled



Photos: Jakob Ebrey

SANSOM AND TREGURTHA MAKE BARWELL BRITISH GT SWITCH

Bentley pair make a move to drive one of two new-for-2023 Lamborghini Huracan EVO2s with the standard-bearer Barwell Motorsport team

By Graham Keilloh

Mark Sansom and Will Tregurtha are switching to multiple champion Barwell Motorsport to race one of two new-for-2023 Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2s in next season's British GT championship.

The Silver-Am duo raced in British GT in an Aspetto Bentley this year, making their debuts in the GT3 contest. They are the first confirmed 2023 driver pairing for the Barwell team that won British GT3 overall drivers' and team's championship doubles in 2020 and '21

and its driver duo Adam Balon and Sandy Mitchell fought for last year's title.

Ginetta Junior champion Tregurtha won British GT's 2017 GT4 championship and has also won races in GT4 European and DTM Trophy. Sansom made his British GT4 debut with Aspetto in 2021.

Barwell bosses recently confirmed their plan to upgrade to Lamborghini's Huracan EVO2 and to revert to a two-car line-up for next season's British GT campaign. The team has traditionally run two Lamborghini GT3s but trimmed to one car this season after reigning champion drivers Russian Leo Machitski

and Dane Dennis Lind couldn't return after Motorsport UK's ban on Russian-licensed drivers.

The driver line-up for Barwell's second 2023 car is due to be announced next year. Moving back to a two-car operation will also allow Barwell to once again fight for the teams' championship.

Sansom said: "Barwell have unsurpassed championship pedigree and I've been hugely impressed with what I've seen of how they operate. I'm also delighted to continue my partnership with Will Tregurtha. He's outstandingly quick and we worked well together last season."



Duo paired up in the 2022 season



Greystone GT take on yet another series in McLaren Trophy

GREYSTONE GT McLAREN PAIR CONFIRMED FOR NEW SERIES

Ron Trenka and Jon Lancaster are Greystone GT's first confirmed pairing for the all-new McLaren Trophy in 2023 in what is intended to be a multi-car line-up for the team.

The Anglo-American driver duo contested four 2022 GT Cup rounds in a Greystone McLaren 570S GT4, taking five top-10 finishes. They now will compete

in the top class of the five-round one-make McLaren Pro-Am championship for a bespoke Artura Trophy car racing on GT World Challenge Europe's package.

Greystone GT this year expanded to race in British GT, International GT Open and GT4 European Series. Its highlight was a Gulf 12 Hours GT4 win.

AUTHORS LAUNCH PRYCE SCHOOL AWARD

The co-authors of a book remembering late Formula 1 driver Tom Pryce have decided to fund an annual trophy for an inspirational pupil at the Welshman's former school.

Darren Banks and Kevin Guthrie co-authored 'Tom Pryce – Memories of a Welsh F1 Star By Those Who Knew Him' in 2020, and initially planned that the book would raise funds for a Pryce statue to be placed in Denbigh.

However the authors after a visit to Denbigh's Ysgol Frongoch primary school, where Pryce was a pupil, and after discussions with the group behind the statue, decided they will instead donate an annual sum to the school, so staff can award the 'Thomas Maldwyn Pryce Inspirational Pupil of the Year'.

It will go to a pupil who has shown hard work, passion and determination towards their goal, or demonstrated a caring and kind nature, over the

TOM PRYCE

MEMORIES OF A WELSH F1 STAR BY THOSE WHO KNEW HIM



DARREN BANKS & KEVIN GUTHRIE

FOREWORD BY NELLA PRYCE INTRODUCTION BY DAVID TREMAYNE

Book authors to award pupils

previous 12 months. In addition £1000 will be donated annually to the school.

Banks and Guthrie will donate all book sale profits to the fund, and the current figure is over £12,000. Also £3475 has been raised on the GoFundMe page set up for the statue, and anyone now wanting their donations returned should contact Dave Jones at davehjoness5@aol.com.

RALLY NEWS

GAME, SET AND TANAK AS WRC'S BIG THREE SECURE PROVEN RALLY WINNERS

The Breen driver swap rumour MN first reported on comes true with M-Sport deal

Photos: M-Sport, mcklein-imagedatabase.com

By Graham Lister

Confirmation of Ott Tanak's M-Sport return for 2023, first reported in Motorsport News two months ago, not only seals a vital deal for the Cumbrian team it also sets up an intriguing World title battle next season.

Tanak inked an agreement with M-Sport last week to complete the Craig Breen driver exchange that MN hinted would happen in its October 27 issue.

As well as giving M-Sport the top-table driver it so badly craved, Tanak's signing means the WRC's three factory teams can count on the services of proven rally winners, which should make for a wide-open championship tussle in 2023.

Toyota will enter Welshman Elfyn Evans and World champion Kalle Rovanpera on all 13 rounds, plus eight-time title winner Sebastien Ogier on selected events.

Hyundai has recruited Esapekka Lappi to replace Tanak as team-mate to Thierry Neuville, while Dani Sordo will carshare the team's third i20 N Rally1.

In Tanak, who scored his breakthrough WRC victory driving for M-Sport in 2017, Malcolm Wilson's

ENTRIES

WRC 2023 MANUFACTURER

TEAM	DRIVER (NAT)
Hyundai	Thierry Neuville (BEL)
Hyundai	Esapekka Lappi (FIN)
Hyundai	Craig Breen (IRL)/ Dani Sordo (ESP)*
M-Sport	Ott Tanak
M-Sport	TBA
M-Sport	TBA
Toyota	Kalle Rovanpera (FIN)
Toyota	Elfyn Evans (GBR)
Toyota	Takamoto Katsuta (JPN)/ Sebastien Ogier (FRA)*

*= Indicates carshare arrangement

team now has the driver capable of capitalising on the potential of its Ford Puma Rally1. Sebastien Loeb used the Chris Williams-penned car to win the Monte Carlo Rally and lead in Portugal and Greece during his four-event campaign in 2022, but Breen only manage two podium visits during a crash-plagued season.

Speaking after Tanak got his first taste of the Puma at M-Sport's Greystoke Forest testing base, Wilson said: "It is fair to say from Ott's initial feedback we are confident we can challenge for the World championship in 2023. Having Ott here for only a couple of days has highlighted to us the level needed to deliver rally-winning performances."



Sealed the deal: Tanak and Wilson

WHY OTT TANAK HAS UNFINISHED BUSINESS WITH THE M-SPORT TEAM

Ott Tanak left M-Sport for a big-money move to Toyota ahead of the 2018 season having won twice for the Cockerham-based team.

He became World champion in 2019 but then left for Hyundai where he had been due to remain for the 2023 campaign only to decide against taking up his option of a fourth year in Alzenau blue after his relationship with the South Korean make and team-mate Thierry Neuville soured.

"M-Sport is the place that raised me as a driver and the place that taught me all the hard lessons and experience to become a top-level player in the WRC," said Estonian Tanak. "Since becoming World champion I have not been able to

defend the title, and I will not be able to make peace with myself until I do."

The 35-year-old continued: "I have had many discussions with Malcolm and we definitely share the same ambition for the upcoming season. It is going to be a big challenge for us, but I know the people at Dovenby Hall, I know what they are capable of and with their passion to give everything they have, we can challenge for the championship.

"I'm happy to be back at M-Sport and we will give everything next year."

M-Sport hasn't disclosed the length of Tanak's deal but it has confirmed his compatriot Martin Jarveoja will co-drive.



Tanak wants to battle for title

WHAT ARE THE CHANCES OF LOEB RETURNING TO M-SPORT?

M-Sport stopped short of confirming Ott Tanak's team-mates during its announcement last week, but has until tomorrow (Friday) to finalise its Monte Carlo Rally line-up.

Entries for the 2023 World championship opener close on December 16 with the provisional list due to be published on January 9.

While hopes of Sebastien Loeb returning to M-Sport gathered momentum when team principal Richard Millener confirmed he has spoken to the 48-year-old about taking the start in the principality in a Ford Puma Rally1,

there had been no further updates when MN's December 15 issue closed for press.

If a deal could be struck for Loeb to join Ott Tanak in M-Sport's Monte line-up and chase a repeat win, Loeb would face another dash back from Saudi Arabia – where the Dakar finishes on January 15 – to be ready for the Monte recce starting on January 16.

When asked his 2023 WRC plans during the Acropolis Rally in September, Loeb said: "For sure I enjoy WRC and I have fun, so why not do some rallies?"

With Adrien Fourmaux



Could Loeb rejoin?

expected to revert to M-Sport's WRC2 effort in 2023, Gus Greensmith has been linked to a Monte outing as part of his hoped-for full-season campaign. Pierre-Louis Loubet and Oliver Solberg have also been linked to the British team's Rally1 squad with all three understood to have access to funding.



Cais abandoned his WRC2 campaign after poor results

MN-BACKED CAIS GETS SKODA SALVATION FOR '23

Erik Cais, the Czech driver tipped by Motorsport News as a future World championship star, has secured the chance to restart his career at international level.

Big things were expected of the 23-year-old when he finished second in WRC2 on his Monte Carlo Rally debut last January.

But with the Ford Fiesta Rally2 proving not the car

have in WRC2, Cais struggled for form and eventually abandoned his multi-event World championship campaign.

However, for 2023 he's plotting a seven-round WRC2 bid alongside five rounds of the European championship in the first customer Skoda Fabia RS Rally2 run by his long-term team Orsak Rally Sport.

"I have spent the last three seasons behind the wheel of the Fiesta Rally2 and I already have enough experience with the four-wheel car," said Cais, who will start his WRC2 bid on the Monte Carlo Rally. "The new Fabia will be the key to success. We have the technical support of Skoda Motorsport at our disposal and I am very much looking

forward to starting with the new car. We are representatives of the Czech [ASN] and the Czech Republic, so I am happy to drive a Czech car. In addition, thanks to the inclusion of the Central European Rally in the WRC, we will have the opportunity to show ourselves in front of the home fans [with the event due to start in the capital Prague]."

RALLY NEWS

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Paul Lawrence



The JBRC man is looking to step up to the top class

EAMONN KELLY SCOOPS BIG-MONEY BILLY COLEMAN AWARD

Irish up-and-comer cements move into the BRC big league

By Jason Craig

Eamonn Kelly says he will use the 100,000 Euros from winning the Billy Coleman Award to campaign a Rally2 car in the British Rally Championship next season.

The 23-year-old Irishman also intends to enter some WRC2 events, starting with April's Croatia Rally where he will drive a Hyundai i20 N Rally2 as reward for winning the Junior British title this year.

Kelly got the nod at Motorsport Ireland's prize-giving from Irish Forestry champion Patrick O'Brien and BRC Academy Trophy winner Kyle McBride.

Kelly said: "It is a surreal feeling to have won and it is the stuff of dreams."

He tackled the last round of this year's British Rally Championship in the family-owned Volkswagen Polo GTI R5. He finished the Cambrian event in third position.

"The extra funding makes everything

possible and will simplify our plans," he added. "We are going to the British Rally Championship because that is where we want to be and we know it will help to bring on our pace in a Rally2 car."

"Any events we have done so far in the Polo have been all new to us and we have been learning about it on asphalt and gravel. We have only scratched the surface but with the extra support and more people behind us, I am confident we can meet our targets."



Kelly has ambitions for '23

WILSON RETURNS TO RALLYING WITH FIESTA RALLY2

Scottish driver Iain Wilson will contest a full Scottish Rally Championship season in a Dom Buckley RSC Ford Fiesta Rally2 next year.

Wilson, who decided to walk away from rallying his Ford Escort Mk2 midway through 2021, lost both a work friend and his mother this year and, with his 50th birthday also falling in 2023, has decided to push the boat out and make a life-long memory.

Wilson told MN: "I felt like walking away from rallying altogether, but I decided I'm going to sell the Escort and put it towards one season."

Unfortunately at the end of the year I'll be left with an empty garage and nothing to show for it, but the more I think about it the more I think it's a great thing to do. The other option is to sell the car and get a new patio and a new roof for my shed, but they're not the sort of memories I want to have. As long as I'm not unlucky, this should be a great memory."

Wilson said he doesn't have any expectations for 2023 but did admit a podium would be nice at some point. He added: "We just want to have an enjoyable year. I'm completely overspending doing this, I can't afford to do it, but I'm going to do it anyway."



The Circuit of Ireland will be more compact for 2023 edition

ONE-DAY FORMAT FOR CIRCUIT OF IRELAND RALLY

Next April's Circuit of Ireland Rally will be pared back to a one-day event in a move designed to help safeguard its immediate future.

As a round of the Irish Tarmac Rally Championship, it had originally been earmarked to run over Easter weekend, but the action will now be confined

to Easter Saturday. Another key development is that officials from the founding Ulster Automobile Club will join forces with Cookstown Motor Club for the first time to organise one of the oldest stage rallies in Europe.

The rally will be based in Cookstown and consist of two

loops of four special stages totalling 70 competitive miles.

Clerk of the course Wayne Turkington said: "I've had these stages in the back of my mind for the last 10 or so years, but I wanted to run them as part of a championship in order to do them justice. All of the stages contain classic roads that have

been used previously.

"I would like to get the Circuit back to a two-day event in 2024 but I believe the first six months of next year is not looking good. The economy doesn't appear great, so a one-day rally makes sense. In the current climate, everyone involved believes that this is the correct decision."

INDRI TO TACKLE PROTYRE SEASON IN 2023 IN MITSUBISHI

After an eight-year gap, former National Asphalt Championship frontrunner John Indri will return for a full season in the MN-supported championship in 2023.

The Essex driver spent most of 2022 experimenting with the set-up of his Mitsubishi Mirage R5+,

after handling problems caused a high-speed off on the East Riding Stages in February.

Since then, he has sought advice from Thomas Weng of Ralliart Sweden who, says Indri, has helped improve both handling and grip.

"When we bought the Mirage it

had only done two gravel rallies, so it wasn't set-up for asphalt. Thomas's advice has improved things, especially rear-end grip."

Indri came close to winning the asphalt championship several times in the early 2000s, using a Metro 6R4 and a Darran T90 GTR. His full return comes after

discussions with series stalwart, John Stone.

Indri explained: "John rang me and said the championship has a good mix of events and plenty of competition. He also joked that they needed some real characters back in the series."

Indri is currently looking for a

co-driver as Matthew Smalley is unavailable. "Matt and his partner are expecting their third child, so he won't have the funds. We've turned the Mirage into a very competitive car and I need a good, experienced navigator to build a competitive team," he said.



Indri wants to tackle the asphalt



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RALLY NEWS

MITCHELL CONSIDERING BRC AFTER POLO SWITCH

Volkswagen's R5 car inspires more confidence for rally man for 2023

Photos: Ben and Paul Lawrence, Malcolm Almond



Mitchell will have a new mount for 2023 season

By Luke Barry

Jason Mitchell is considering at least a partial British Rally Championship season next year in his new Volkswagen Polo GTI R5.

Mitchell, 44, has only ever rallied Ford Fiestas but has made the switch to a Polo for 2023 and the Northern Irishman is looking at his options.

He told MN: "I like the British Rally Championship from the point of view I get a mixture of gravel and Tarmac because I'm getting happier on both surfaces now. We'll definitely go to Galway and I think we will try and do the Malcolm Wilson. But I'm not really ready yet to be trying to push for a championship or anything so we'll

try and build the experience this year and hopefully we can try and get some decent results."

On the car swap, Mitchell added: "I just feel I want to change. I want to try something different because I've found a driving style that I want to stick with and I've been trying to find cars that suit it most, and the car that seems to be pulling out the results consistently on both surfaces is the Polo."

"I drove the Polo for the first time and the minute I got into the car something felt right. But we won't know until we pull up to [interviewer] Killian Duffy at the end of the stage for an interview and he tells us to drive on or he stops us!"

PAYTON REBUILDS AFTER CADWELL ROLL

Leading Ford Escort Mk2 rally driver Josh Payton is well on with the rebuild of his car after rolling out of the Cadwell Park Stages last month.

Bristol-based Payton rolled on the steep access road to the pitlane after clipping a bale but already has the two-litre

Vauxhall engined car stripped back to a bare bodyshell and being repaired.

His main focus in recent times has been the MN-supported Circuit Rally Championship and his spectacular driving style earned him a place in the top 10 vote for the MN national

rally driver of the year award.

Payton is keen to step up and do some closed-road rallies next year. He said: "We went to Belgium for the Escort Rally Special in September and really enjoyed it. We're going to do a few closed-road events next year I think."

However, he will also be going racing as he is currently building a 2.5-litre Millington-engined Ford Cortina Mk2 for the Modified Ford series. "We started with a bare bodyshell and I'm building it now. I've done some trackdays, but never raced before," he said.



Payton shortly before overturning his Ford Escort

TURKEY RUN RALLY ENTRY FULL

A capacity 80-car entry will contest the Turkey Run Rally in Northern Ireland on Thursday, December 29 based within the former Shackleton military base near Ballykelly.

Eight-time Northern Ireland Rally champion Derek McGarrity will have his debut in the Skoda Fabia Rally2

Evo that took Andreas Mikkelsen to WRC2 victory on the Monte Carlo Rally and Sweden.

Jason Mitchell will run his newly acquired Volkswagen Polo GTI R5, and neighbour Ryan Caldwell will step up from front-wheel drive to four-wheel drive for the event, which features five stages and 36 competitive miles.

Last year, Desi Henry led from start to finish from 2019 winner Aaron McLaughlin. Competition also comes from Joseph McGonigle, Kenny McKinstry and Cathan McCourt.

Clerk of the course Ian Connolly said: "There was a time when airfield-based events like the Turkey Run were maybe not seen as a

proper rally but that has changed, what with forest events proving so expensive and there only being a set number of road closing orders to work with in Northern Ireland.

"The whole route has been reversed – it is going to be completely different – and I am confident all the crews will enjoy what we have come up with."

BIRD PLANS MORE OUTINGS IN 2023

Ford Fiesta R5 driver Daniel Bird is planning more outings next year, following a phenomenal debut at the recent Colin Ellmore Memorial Rally at Deenethorpe airfield.

Bird and co-driver Tony Hart ran third overall for most of the day before a loose turbo pipe cost time, dropping him to an eventual fourth.

In 2023 the Lincolnshire man will contest five or six single-venue events including at Cadwell Park and Donington. He says he wants to build experience, get used to how the car handles and learn to work with his co-driver. "I heard some of Tony's route instructions, but it

was a bit of a blur," Bird said.

Bird is particularly keen to contest the Alan Healy Memorial Stages at Cadwell Park next April. "I've done trackdays there and it is a great circuit. I am sure we can do well," he added.

Bird is the son of former Tour of Lincs and Dukeries Rally winner, Keith Bird and says that going rallying is a dream come true. He explained: "I used to go to events my dad competed on, and I have always wanted to rally myself. We took it steadily because it was our debut. I wasn't really looking at our times but getting as high as we did was amazing."



Mowlem crashed at the finish line

RACER MOWLEM ENDS GRIZEDALE DEBUT ON A ROLL

Experienced GT racer Johnny Mowlem successfully finished his first rally despite rolling on the Grizedale Stages in the Lake District.

Mowlem tackled the event in a Ford Escort Mk2 with British Rally Champion Matt Edwards as co-driver.

The one-off rally was a thank you from Bonamy Grimes, who has been guided and coached by Mowlem through his motorsport career.

Mowlem was 45th at the finish, and 11th in class. Mowlem said: "We experienced everything: night stages and a final

18-mile stage where the notes finally began to make sense and the speed began to follow.

"The real positive is that I finished my first-ever rally in the top half overall.

"The negative is I went over the final finish line upside down!"



Bird was thrilled with his pace on the Colin Ellmore Memorial

SPORTING SCENE NEWS

LYDDEN HILL REJOINS THE WORLD RALLYCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP LINE-UP FOR 2023 SEASON

Iconic British track to host the best RX drivers for a mid-summer date



Photos: World RX

Lydden returns to World RX line-up

By Hal Ridge

The Lydden Hill circuit will make a return to the World Rallycross Championship schedule for the first time since 2017, on July 22-23 next year.

The Kent venue is one of a number of returning circuits to the World RX calendar, including Mettet in Belgium and Estering in Germany.

The 10-round World RX schedule has a more traditional feel over recent years, with a number of Formula 1 circuits, Spa-Francorchamps, Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya and

the Nurburgring not returning for 2023.

The series will, however, travel to the three required continents to be a World Championship for the first time since 2019, with the season concluding with a return to Cape Town in South Africa, and at a yet-to-be-confirmed venue in Asia.

“We are delighted to finally be spreading our wings and venturing outside of Europe again,” said World RX boss Arne Dirks. “Ever since taking over as promoter of this great championship, we have been committed to returning to Cape Town to showcase World

RX in front of the enthusiastic South African fans, and we are hugely excited to be adding a new event in Asia to the line-up, which truly underscores the series’ World Championship credentials.

“At the same time, the reintroduction of three charismatic European venues in Lydden Hill, Mettet and Estering reflects our desire to celebrate rallycross’s rich heritage and traditions while embracing the sport’s electric future.”

In addition to the World RX event at Lydden Hill, the circuit and the British Rallycross Championship has announced that

the national series for Supercar machines will run as a support race during the World RX weekend in late July next year.

“It’s fantastic to give 5 Nations BRX Supercar drivers the chance to race at Lydden Hill in what will be one of the most anticipated rallycross events in the world next year,” said 5 Nations BRX manager Drew Furlong.

“We will give entry priority to those drivers who are supporting 5 Nations BRX in 2023, but will also welcome one-off entrants, as we do to all our rounds, for what should be a brilliant weekend.”

CALENDAR		
World Rallycross Championship 2023		
DATE	VENUE	ROUND
May 20-21	Euro RX of Hungary, Nyirad	Euro RX1/RX3
June 17-18	World RX of Norway, Hell	Round 1
July 1-2	World RX of Sweden, Holjes	Round 2
July 22-23	World RX of United Kingdom, Lydden Hill ***	Round 3
August 5-6	World RX of Benelux, Mettet ***	Round 4
August 26-27	World RX of Portugal, Montalegre	Round 5
September 9-10	World RX of Germany, Estering ***	Round 6
October 21-22	World RX of South Africa, Cape Town **	Round 7-8
November 25-26	TBA, Asia **	Round 9-10
* Subject to promoter agreement		
** Subject to track homologation		

WEATHER FORCES IRISH SHOWDOWN POSTPONEMENT

The final round of the Irish Rallycross Championship, due to take place last weekend at Mondello Park, was postponed due to adverse weather in the region.

The event, one of the most anticipated standalone Irish RX events in several years, was called off on Friday as snow and fog covered the Naas circuit.

Newly crowned British Rallycross champion Patrick

O’Donovan had entered the event in a Proton Iriz RX Supercar, while British RX regular Roger Thomas was also due to join the field with Ford Fiesta.

“Due to the current poor weather we are unfortunately going to have to cancel this Sunday’s rallycross,” said a statement from series organisers on Friday. “The freezing fog is making visibility too low and

dangerous for drivers and marshals, the forecast is for freezing fog all day Sunday, so in light of this we have taken the decision to postpone Sunday’s rallycross.”

While Derek Tohill has already wrapped up the overall crown, his sixth IRX title, a number of class categories are still to be decided. The event is planned to now run on January 8 at the same circuit.



The Irish Rallycross runners will have to wait to the new year to finish the 2022 season

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MOTORSPORT NEWS

EXCLUSIVE Q&A GARY AYLES

THE sports car and tin-top ace takes on another challenge: the M11 round, as a test of his skills

Il. Morgan and Thompson are all back for more in UK's most prestigious contest

TITLE THREATS CONFIRM BTCC RETURN FOR 2023 SEASON

INSIGHT COLES TURNS HEADS THE HILL

Why BTCC Ford focus in 2022

Why BTCC Ford focus in 2022

Why BTCC Ford focus in 2022

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HISTORICS

DOWN THE WORKSHOP

1932 FRAZER NASH NURBURG

Current owner: Dick Smith



The car cost less than £300...

He's had it for 62 years

"I've owned it since 1960. It was a wedding present from my wife. When Rosemary bought it for me it was a racing car used on the road and it was the only car I had. I went to work in it every day and we went to Italy in it several times on holiday."

It's got real history

"In 1932, it ran in the German Grand Prix with the Frazer Nash works driver AFP Fane. But on the way to the Nurburgring he got shunted in the back by a tram and it bent the chassis. About 150 miles into the grand prix, the car's handling became worse and worse. I don't know how Fane managed because he was well up in the class."

It raced at Brooklands

"They brought it back to England and ran it in the 500-mile race at Brooklands and finished seventh, which was pretty good because it's a very small engine compared to the 21-litre cars. It averaged just under 90mph, including pitstops. Then it ran at Shelsley Walsh in 1932 and won the MAC Cup. It was raced from 1932 until 1939 with various private owners."

Post-War story

"Through the war, it was tucked away somewhere. By the end of the 1950s, it was just an old racing car. It cost Rosemary £275 and everybody said we'd been done! It is, without doubt, the most desirable Nash of the lot. I think she was very, very brave to buy it. We saw a picture of it on the back of a book in a bookshop. I said: 'My God, look at that Frazer Nash. That is the ultimate sports-racing car, which you can drive on the road, and yet race in a grand prix.'"

It took all their savings

"We were engaged for three and a half years and she saved her money all that time. Every scrap of money that was left we put in the bank for buying furniture for our house. And she blew the lot. She said: 'I looked at your face when we actually found it. I knew you'd just got to have it.'"

It's been in constant use

"I've competed with it ever since and it always given me enormous pleasure. It's a fantastic Nash to drive as well. My three sons will inherit it when I die, so they're going to share. This will stay in the family for forever."

ALL-LOTUS CORTINA RACE SET TO HEADLINE GOODWOOD MEMBERS' MEETING

Ford's rocket ship saloon to be celebrated at the West Sussex season-opener

By Paul Lawrence

The 60th anniversary of the launch of the Ford Lotus Cortina will be marked by the first all-Cortina race during the Goodwood Members' Meeting in April.

A grid of 30 cars is expected for a 45-minute two-driver race, with star drivers sharing the cars with owners. The race will be named the Jim Clark Trophy in memory of the Scot who won the 1964 British Saloon Car Championship in a Cortina as well as two Formula 1 World titles. It is thought that Clark won every race that he ever contested in a Cortina.

The Cortina-only race is the latest in Goodwood's run of high-profile one-model races at the Members' Meeting after similar contests for Ford GT40s, Porsche 911s and Minis. At last September's



Photos: Paul and Ben Lawrence

The iconic Lotus Cortina

Goodwood Revival, leading Cortinas were raced by Andrew Jordan, Stoffel Vandoorne and Craig Breen.

The full race line-up for the 80th Members' Meeting (April 15-16) has now been confirmed and includes the return of several popular grids, including

the SF Edge Trophy for the amazing Edwardian monsters racing in two five-lap sprints.

Two more headline races returning to the schedule for 2023 are the Trofeo Nuvolari and Moss Trophy. Tazio Nuvolari will be celebrated 90 years on from his victories in

the RAC Tourist Trophy, Le Mans 24 Hours and the Millie Miglia in a single summer. The Nuvolari race will be for pre-1939 sportscars.

The Moss Trophy will be for closed-cockpit GT cars and prototypes in the spirit of the RAC TT races of 1958-1962.



Breen is delighted with his restored Cosworth

BREEN PAYS TRIBUTE TO TEAM THAT REBUILT HIS COSWORTH

Craig Breen has paid tribute to the team of people who helped get his Ford Sierra Cosworth ready for the recent Killarney Historic.

Though he was denied a shot at victory when the transmission failed before the final stage, the WRC driver told his Facebook audience that the car is a masterpiece.

Breen said: "After nearly two years of hard work, passion, and dedication, this masterpiece is

finally finished. It gives me goosebumps every time I see it. When I managed to track down this car, I could never imagine that the end product could have been as good as this. Tom Gahan and his team have done the most incredible job."

The car is now back in the 1992 Circuit of Ireland livery as used by Breen's boyhood hero Frank Meagher and he says that Meagher fuelled his passion for rallying.

SIX GOLD MEDALS EARNED ON LE-JOG

Six of the 50 starters on the recent HERO-ERA-run Le-Jog did well enough to qualify for a Gold Medal.

The rally remains one of Europe's toughest classic rallies as crews left Land's End early on Saturday and finished at John O'Groats on

Tuesday morning after navigational sections and special tests in a 1300-mile route.

Among the gold medal winners was Bill Cleynert and Emily Anderson in their Bentley, the only pre-war car in the field.



Cleynert took a gold medal



Memories of Spice will be evoked at Goodwood

NEW TITLE FOR GROUP 1 RACES AT GOODWOOD

The Group 1 touring car race at the Goodwood Members' Meeting will have a new brand for 2023.

After 10 years as the Gerry Marshall Trophy, the race is being retitled the Gordon Spice Trophy to celebrate one of the leading touring car racers of the era.

Spice was renowned for his success in Ford Capris and raced

one in the British Saloon Car Championship from 1975 to 1982.

Now, the showcase race at the 80th Members' Meeting will run for the Gordon Spice Trophy, with two heats and a final for up to 60 cars.

A Goodwood spokesman said: "Gordon Spice passed away in 2021 and we're extremely happy to honour his life with the new trophy."

IN BRIEF

RIP Silverstone Syd

MN was very sorry to learn of the death of 'Silverstone Syd' Herbert last week after a short illness. Syd was known to everyone who visited Silverstone and did some club racing in the 1960s before taking on the role of driving the fire tender that used to follow the pack around on the first lap of races. He was a great character with countless friends across the sport and MN sends sincere condolences to his family and close friends.

Modsports is go

The Historic Modified Sports and Special Saloon Series will step up a gear in 2023 with a six-date schedule from the HSCC. The emphasis remains on pre-1980 cars and the regulations have been revised ready for 2023 when there will be races at Snetterton, Silverstone GP, Donington Park and Brands Hatch GP as well as the Croft Nostalgia meeting and the HSCC Silverstone Finals meeting in October.

Owens is a HERO

Porsche 911 driver Stephen Owens has won the HERO Cup for Drivers following the deciding event, the daunting Land's End to John O'Groats rally. Owens had been runner up in the drivers' cup five times previously, but finally sealed the title this year. Meanwhile, Pete Johnson won the HERO Golden Roamer award for the highest-placed navigator in 2022 after guiding Noel Kelly's Volvo 122 to John O'Groats.

HRF date set

The date for next year's Historic Rally Festival has been set for the weekend of Saturday, September 30 and Sunday, October 1. The Motorsport UK-permitted special stage demonstration event will again be based in Telford with special stages run at the Ironbridge power station and at nearby Weston Park. Up to 60 selected rally cars will take part and the event will include a repeat of the popular dusk stages on Saturday evening in Weston Park.

Kop cash

The Kop Hill Climb, held each September on the closed road hill near Princes Risborough, raised £107,000 in 2022 for local charities. Since its first edition in 2009, the non-competitive demonstration hillclimb has now raised £977,000 and is likely to break the £1 million mark when it runs again on September 16-17 next year.

Kelly cautious

Regular outings for Irish Tarmac and National Rally champion Donagh Kelly are unlikely after he took his BMW M3 to sixth place on the Killarney Historic Rally. Kelly said: "I couldn't see where I would have the time or the speed anymore. I need a lot of work to get up to speed again. When you have been out of the car for a while, it takes time to get the confidence up." Kelly is more regularly found in his modern VW Polo R5.



Kelly enjoyed a rare BMW outing

COLUMNIST

MATT JAMES



MN editor Matt James is getting excited about the 2023 BTCC bill already



Legends will perform at the Brands Hatch meet



The Mini marvels will thrill the crowds at Thruxton



Caterhams will slipstream around Silverstone

Photos: Gary Hawkins, Mick Walker, Richard Styles

The news this week that Porsche has confirmed the Carrera Cup GB will remain as part of the British Touring Car Championship package until at least 2026 is welcome. It means that the sportscar series will once again form a fundamental element of the BTCC race days.

As well as the Porsche Sprint Challenge series joining full-time for all of its six rounds, this is very a positive step.

Both the Ginetta GT4 Supercup and the Ginetta Junior series have left and found an alternative home and there was some concern about the make-up of the TOCA support bill going forward. But, with the elements that have now been put in place (including a raft of guest series), all is rosy.

I questioned the benefits (or otherwise) of the fixed BTCC undercard when the package was first introduced in the early 1990s, just as the tin-top series itself was about to go into overdrive in terms of popularity.

While the BTCC delivers the highest profile meetings in the UK, the locked-in nature of the package meant that only certain championships would get to benefit from that showcase and the publicity it generated. There were plenty of other extremely competitive and worthwhile categories in Britain that were, effectively, excluded from the BTCC support bill. There was a feeling of the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', particularly in the early days, within the rest of national racing.

The move to create the package was something driven by the desire to make the BTCC the juggernaut it has become today. You couldn't rightfully ask a fan to come through the gates at a BTCC meeting and part with their hard-earned cash only to see the main

WHAT'S GOING ON WHERE?

Which BTCC support races are scheduled for 2023

April 22-23 Donington Park British F4, Porsche Carrera Cup, Porsche Sprint Challenge, Mini Challenge	British F4, Mini Cooper, Porsche Carrera Cup, Mini Miglia, Mini Sevens	August 26-27 Donington Park GP British F4, Porsche Carrera Cup, Porsche Sprint Challenge, Mini Cooper
May 6-7 Brands Hatch British F4, Porsche Carrera Cup, Mini Challenge, Legends UK	June 17-18 Oulton Park British F4, Porsche Carrera Cup, Mini Challenge, Radicals	September 23-24 Silverstone Porsche Carrera Cup, Porsche Sprint Challenge, Mini Challenge, Caterham Seven
May 20-21 Snetterton British F4, Porsche Sprint Challenge, Mini Challenge, Radicals	July 29-30 Croft British F4, Porsche Cayman, Mini Cooper, Legends UK	October 7-8 Brands Hatch GP British F4, Porsche Carrera Cup, Porsche Sprint Challenge, Mini Challenge
June 3-4 Thruxton	August 12-13 Knockhill British F4, Porsche Carrera Cup, Mini Challenge, Legends UK	

show and a scattergun programme below that. There was no form to it, no consistency.

I am not an accountant – and never will be – but I can also understand the counter point of view (from those who would shoot me down in flames and, yes, I do expect BTCC boss Alan Gow on the blower as soon as he reads this). The BTCC and the infrastructure of its support bill doesn't come cheap and signing up multiple full-time series with manufacturer funding that can help put something back in the pot is entirely understandable.

Also, because those categories have a regular support slot, they are almost semi-professional. The whole level of presentation and performance ramps up with a guaranteed slot on the BTCC undercard. As a result, the whole show has the feeling of something very special. That's not surprising when you consider the vast amount of airtime the supports are granted by the broadcaster ITV. There really is nothing to rival it on the national racing scene.

Things are set to be slightly different next year. Gow has said that he would like to see a championship for junior racers introduced from 2024 and beyond. That's for the future and what it means is there will be chances in 2023 for some other categories to get a look-in and grab a sliver of the TOCA package pie.

On this page there is a list of which championships will form part of the line-up at each of the events next year. It should have race fans licking their lips because the series that have tied up deals to join the package in 2023 are all excellent choices.

I will never forget photographer Jakob Ebrey walking back from the chicane at Thruxton a few years ago as I was walking in the opposite direction, only for him to tell me that the Mini Miglia clash he had just snapped was "the best race I have ever seen". That is high praise indeed from a man who has seen thousands of events. More of the same in 2023 – at the same venue – is likely. The Caterham Seven series is popular and the racing is frenetic, while BTCC fans will get a glimpse at some prototype-style action with Radicals appearing on the line-up on two occasions as well.

But the category I am most looking forward to joining the package is Legends. The domestic Scottish contest was part of the TOCA roster at Knockhill back in 2009 and the gasps from the crowd were audible. The short, sharp races had the fans on the edge of their seats and trust me, the BTCC drivers stopped their debriefs between races to watch. The highly popular UK series will turn many heads when it appears on three occasions in 2023.

While the shake-up in the package is unusual, it has created an opportunity for several of national racing's leading lights to really make a name for themselves and that is only a good thing as far as I am concerned.

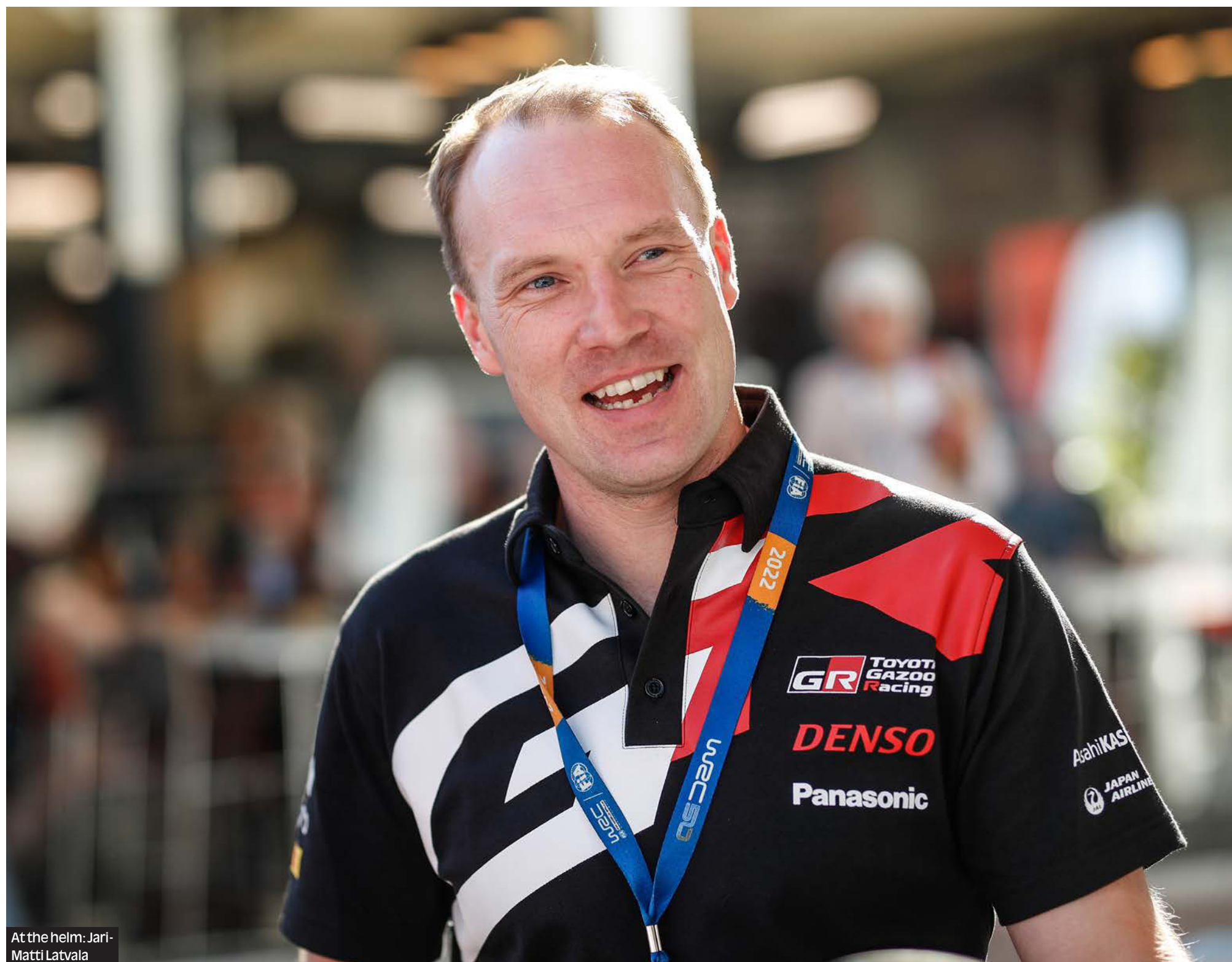
"Photographer Jakob Ebrey said to me 'that's the best race I have ever seen'"

FEATURE

LATVALA:

I DROVE WITH A PASSION FOR THE WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Matt James spoke to the 18-time WRC round winner and boss of the multiple title-winning Toyota World Rally Team to pose your questions



At the helm: Jari-Matti Latvala

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com, Jakob Ebrey, Motorsport Images, Toyota Gazoo Racing



Latvala's first top-flight outing was on GB in 2002

It is probably not a statistic that Jari-Matti Latvala likes to be reminded of, but the 18-time World Rally Championship event winner is the man who has collected the most trophies as a driver without clinching the biggest prize of all.

But, by rights, he can still claim to have conquered the globe in his role as the team principal of the Toyota Gazoo Racing World Rally Team. And then some. He has steered the Japanese marque to a raft of success in recent seasons which included a lock-out of the drivers and teams' title this year and also involved the unearthing the WRC's Next Big Thing in Kalle Rovanpera. It was the second-successive season that the Yaris has reached the summit of the drivers' and teams' competitions.

The now-37-year-old grew up around the service parks proffering support to his father Jari's successful domestic career in Finland. Latvala Jr's progress was rapid

and it included an outing on Wales Rally GB in 2002 when he was just 17 years old. He ironed out any mistakes and learned his craft with a season in the British Rally Championship in 2003 – which also involved a sign-off win on the season-ending Tempest Rally – alongside four outings in the World Rally Championship in a Ford Focus WRC. Success in the Production Car World Rally Championship in a Subaru Impreza in 2006 was the launchpad he needed to then go on and announce himself in the top tier in 2007 in the Stobart VK M-Sport World Rally Team and a year later he was a winner with Malcolm Wilson's main squad in Sweden. Some 17 victories later, and he had a phone call that changed the direction of his life when he took over as team principal at the Toyota Gazoo Racing World Rally Team from Tommi Makinen in 2021. The silverware garnered since then has been hugely impressive and it shows no signs of slowing down either. We caught up with Latvala in Italy last week, shortly before the FIA prize-giving ceremony and we are grateful for his time.

Question: What are your recollections of going rallying with your father Jari? You must have felt like you were born in a service park!
John Wood
Via email
Jari-Matti Latvala: "The very first memories from my childhood is already from rallying. The first thing I recall from when I was a young boy was trying to fix my father's rally car when it was broken. My father had a small team and he would have to repair the car himself and he would always be in a hurry. I remember trying to go there with the tools to try and

continued on page 16



Co-driver Miikka Anttila (l) and Jari-Matti Latvala contested the 2003 British Rally Championship

"I was trying to fix dad's car when I was three"

Jari-Matti Latvala

FEATURE



A fine Production Car WRC
Australia outing was a milestone

help him and get the car ready again. I was so young: I had no skills in repairing a car, but the passion was there already when I was three years old!

"By the time I was four years old, I knew I wanted to become a professional rally driver. So, I have been breathing and living with the passion all of my life.

"I started driving when I was eight years old and I had a Ford Escort Mk1. I was just learning my way, but then I did my first competition driving in a Toyota Corolla."

MN: And do you think starting in a rear-wheel-drive car was an advantage?

JML: "Do you know what? Yes, this is how I started, in a rear-wheel-drive Corolla. I was just 16 years old. In these days it is different but even in my time, it was more typical to drive with the front-wheel-drive cars. That was the path that most people were taking. But for me, I had done rear-wheel drive and I was not actually that good in front-wheel-drive cars.

"I think the rear-wheel-drive car gave me a little bit more of an aggressive style, and if you look at my career, I have always been known for that more aggressive style. Maybe that

is where that is coming from...

"Learning with a front-wheel-drive car would possibly help your style a little bit more. You would be more neat-and-tidy, let's say, but I am very proud of what I learned, because I learned it in the old style and people can recognise that."

MN: But it does seem today that all young rally drivers learn in is front-wheel drive...

JML: "It is true, there are not so many rear-wheel-drive cars, actually, available. But jumping from a front-wheel-drive car to a four-wheel-drive car these days, I think that is the right action to go. The front-wheel-drive cars are pretty easy cars to drive and so it goes hand-by-hand that you will adapt to four-wheel drive. Even though they are a bit different, the transition is less. In my days, the four-wheel-drive cars were not so easy to drive. Back then, you had to be more aggressive so I think that my rear-wheel-drive experience was helping me. But things have changed over the last 20 years."

Question: What are Jari-Matti's memories of competing in the British

Rally Championship back in 2003?
Martyn Tippet
Via Facebook

JML: "These are good memories, I really enjoyed it. It was a great championship to be part of. I won the last round of the championship, but I had two big, big accidents. One on the Jim Clark, and the other one was on the Manx."

MN: Both Tarmac rallies...

JML: "Yes you are right. I can certainly tell you that I was pushing hard. I was pushing really, really hard but I did quite a lot of mistakes. But, at the same time, I was happy I could drive all these forests like Kielder and we were in Scotland too. All these classic stages I was able to do. I rallied on Myherin, I went to the Manx, I saw all these classic, classic places and that was also really good for my experience."

Question: What was the most important win of your early career? What was the one that got you noticed the most, do you think?

Lola Barclay

Via email

JML: "The results which were very

important in my career was when I finished the end of the 2006 season. When I won the Production Car World Rally Car Championship round in Australia and I was sixth overall. Two weeks later, I won again in New Zealand and I was eighth overall. Those two victories – now you would call it Rally2 – that gave me the opportunity to drive the Stobart WRC Ford Focus."

Question: What feelings do you have of Sweet Lamb? You took one of your first wins there in a Corolla in 2003 and crashed there in 2015...

Paul Lawrence

Via email

JML: "This question is right. It is always a nice feeling when you know that that particular stage is coming up in Rally GB, I really enjoyed the driving there. The stage was good fun with the water splash and the jump. Usually the grip level changed quite often on that stage and that is why it was difficult. And then in 2015, it was the most embarrassing accident that I had in my career. I changed a brand-new tyre before the start of the stage and I couldn't get any heat into that front-right

tyre. There was a straight at the start, then the first corner and then accelerating down the next straight to the second corner. Under braking, I lost control of the car because the tyre didn't have the heat. It was a small roll but I ended up in a big ditch with a lot of water..."

MN: The problem with Sweet Lamb is that all the TV crews and photographers are there...

JML: "Correct! But there are some nice memories even from this because it was zero degrees and these two very helpful people, they offered us to join them in their caravan and I was even given a jacket by one guy. So they kept us warm..."

Question: You were one of very few drivers to win in three different regulation types of WRC cars. Of the three, which was your favourite?

Joe Bramble

Via Twitter

JML: "For sure, winning with the Yaris World Rally Car in 2017 in Sweden. That car has been the most impressive but I also enjoyed the Ford Focus WRC rally cars too."

"Maybe a rear-wheel-drive car made me more aggressive"

Jari-Matti Latvala



Maiden WRC success came on Rally Sweden early on in 2008



Poland in 2009 was not an event that Latvala will remember fondly



Rally Ireland 2007 brought step onto the WRC podium

“When I won with the Ford Fiesta and the Volkswagen Polo, they were nice cars too, but number one certainly has to be the Yaris.”
MN: What about the Yaris did you like particularly?
JML: “It was the fastest machine I had ever driven with the aerodynamics on the car too. If you were confident, like in Finland, the aero on the car it was almost like the faster you went, the more grip you had at the rear of the car. The downforce from the rear spoiler was pushing the Yaris into the ground. That kind of feeling was really amazing. On gravel, you don’t necessarily feel so much of the grip level – usually it was only on Tarmac but with this type of car, you could feel the g-forces on the gravel too.”
MN: Did you almost have to change your mentality, because you weren’t used to having that much aero...
JML: “Yes, and I think also that has been a bit of a challenge for the younger drivers coming into the sport. When they come from a Rally2 car where there is no big rear spoiler and less aero, to then come to a Rally1 WRC car and to be able to push the car to the limits and to trust the aero

that you have is something that is hard to do. You have to learn it because that trust is not coming in one day or overnight.”
Question: Who was your most competitive team-mate in the World Rally Championship?
Steven Nye
Via email
JML: “Sebastien Ogier. No hesitation. This is without question.”
MN: Just because he was so fast all of the time?
JML: “It is not that, it is because he has the most incredible desire to win that I have ever seen.”
MN: But you have a passion to win as well...
JML: “I had passion but after my career, I can tell you that he is the one who has that desire even more than me.”
Question: Is it true you can’t survive without coffee?
Graham Lister
Via email
JML: “This is almost true, yes! I simply can’t get my day going without the coffee. You need it in the morning, and you need



Rally Finland in 2014 brought a very tense victory for Latvala



First win with VW was on the 2013 Acropolis

FEATURE



Latvala was an intrinsic part of the Volkswagen attack



Latvala rates his former team-mate (and now employee) as one of the toughest he has come up against



Signing off: Latvala's last appearance in the WRC was in a privately-run Yaris in Sweden in the 2020 season

it around after every three hours. On a tense rally event, I am going to be needing one all of the time."

Question: When did you feel under the most pressure in your WRC career?
Malcolm Munt
Via email

JML: "That was in 2019. Particularly towards the end of the season. That was more to do with my personal life, and it was affecting my performance behind the wheel. My personal life was going a bit on the wrong tracks and when the personal life was not in balance, I was bringing those problems to the rally driving. Then I was not running very well, and I was not able to perform. I think that was the biggest pressure I had ever had, and I think it reached its worst point on Rally Catalunya at the end of the season."

Question: When you crashed on the final superspecial in Poland in 2009 [in the M-Sport Ford Focus out of an assured second place] what did team boss Malcolm Wilson say to you?
Amanda Colegate
Via email

JML: "Malcolm was very angry, I can tell you! There was some bad language – I don't want to go into details – but it was, let's say, difficult. The problem was that I had a big passion to win and I wanted to show my skills. But – it is like this – from what Malcolm told me, I didn't follow the rules. It is like when your boss tells you what you have to do but you then go and do things the other way and it didn't end up very well. You can imagine in that situation that your boss is not going to be very happy."

Question: Which was your hardest WRC win and why?
Emma Simpson
Via email

JML: "This was 2014 on Rally Finland in the Volkswagen Polo R WRC. I got technical problems after I hit this hole in

the stage. That meant we lost the brake calliper on the front right-hand side of the car because the brake pipe had got jammed and was then ripped off.

"I had been leading the rally by 30 seconds. I had to fight for about three-and-a-half stages with this problem which meant that the braking was weak, obviously. That was one of the biggest fights for survival that I have ever done. It was on the second day of the rally. My 30s lead went down to three seconds. On the final day with Ogier, we started three seconds ahead and we ended the day three seconds ahead. That was the biggest pressure what I have had for a victory."

Question: What's your favourite stage and why?
Jack Crowther
Via email

MN: It is probably not Sweet Lamb, is it...

JML: "No, it is not Sweet Lamb! I did enjoy a lot the Myherin stage in Wales, that was one of the really nice stages. But if I can say, I think my actual favourite is Vellipohja in Finland. Why? Because it is very fast. But the difference between Vellipohja and Ouninpohja is that Ouninpohja has all of the jumps but it is also like a roller coaster. Vellipohja goes up and down and there is a lot of climbing and going down and you go down into the long, long corners and that is really asking you for some commitment. When you do stages like that, you feel extremely great after that."

Question: Was it always your intention to become a team manager?
Jonathan Astbury
Via email

JML: "No it wasn't. At some point at the end of my driving career as a works driver, I started to think about what to do after my rallying stopped. I actually started a company of my own with historic rally cars and I have a museum.



The Flying Finn on his way to glory in Sweden in during 2017

“I was thinking a bit that maybe I could be a team principal, but that was just like a little dream and I never thought it would become a reality for me. It was so far out of reach that it wasn’t really my target, but then Toyota made a phone call to me at the end of the 2020 season. They asked me if I would be willing to take this job as team principal.”

MN: Were you surprised when you got the phone call? Did it come out of the blue?

JML: “I was really surprised I can tell you. It was one of those moments in your life when you have to balance things. We were living in the pandemic time and I had to make a decision. I wanted to still try to be a driver but then there was this offer of the chance to become a team principal and this kind of offer comes only once in a lifetime. I felt that if I had turned it down then, it might not have come around again. So, after 30s of thinking, I said yes, I wanted to do it. I needed to go for it.”

MN: Did you think you had the right skills? You obviously had experience and you had seen other team principals...

JML: “I had seen lots of team principals, as you said, so I had that experience, but I had not really had the experience or the education to lead people. Of course, this was something that I was missing. This

worried me a little bit and I was a little bit concerned on how I would manage that aspect of the role.

“I can deal well with the drivers – that was something that I knew I could do. But the question mark was how I could deal with all the other people in the team...”

MN: It seems you have done OK!

JML: “Yes, I have done OK! But there have been a lot of people helping me along the way. I had some very good advice and help throughout my time with the Toyota Gazoo Racing World Rally Team.”

Question: How good is the new World champion, Kalle Rovanpera, and how much room for improvement is there?

Emma Facey
Via email

JML: “He is already incredibly good at his level already. He is a big talent and he is the kind of talent that you don’t see very often coming into this sport at this level. Maybe only once in a decade can you see this kind of talent come along.”

Question: What does Elfyn Evans need to do to rediscover his form?

Leo Barclay
Via email

JML: “Well Elfyn has, certainly, the speed. That he has. One thing we were

struggling with a little bit was that the car was different from last year and he found it hard to get comfortable with this new car with the fresh regulations for 2022. There was less opportunities to play with the car. There were more limited things to do with the suspension and with the transmission.

“I just had a good discussion with him before Rally Japan and I think now he has started to get some confidence and we just need to, next year, concentrate on his work and not worry so much about Kalle and the other drivers in the team. When he can build up the confidence with the car then he is certainly capable of winning rallies and also the championship title. But we need to make sure that he gets that confidence with the car and he was just lacking that a little bit in 2022.”

MN: Is he under pressure to prove himself in 2023?

JML: “I would not say that he is really under pressure. He knows himself also where the problem is. If you don’t know where the problem is, then you have a major issue. So, in that sense, he doesn’t have pressure because he knows that Kalle is quick. But the point is not to think about the others. He needs to focus on himself and I think that will be the most important thing for him.” ■



Latvala and his driver Elfyn Evans (r) have planned ahead for 2023



Latvala on his way to second in the WRC standings during 2015 season

“Being a WRC team boss was a dream for me”

Jari-Matti Latvala



Latvala thinks that Rovanpera is already at a “very high level”...

WRC TOP 20

RECALLING THE MOMENTS THE WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP WROTE ITS OWN HEADLINES

Our staff run through 20 of the most iconic memories from the WRC's 50-year history

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com, Motorsport Images, Red Bull Content Pool

From the very first moments, in 1973, a World championship was formalised for rallying, manufacturers knew it would be the ultimate proving ground for their road-going products. The tough tests of endurance and stamina could write their own headlines for firms trying to showcase their machines.

When the World title for drivers came along in 1979 to replace the FIA Cup for Drivers, the set-up was complete. Five decades on from the first manufacturers' crown, the sport is still thriving and embracing new technology to keep it as relevant as it can be to the road car marketplace.

And it is still writing its own headlines for drivers too, with Kalle Rovnanpera being crowned as the youngest-ever WRC title winner this season for Toyota Gazoo Racing in his Yaris. The stories just don't stop coming.

Here, our reporters Matt James, Graham Keilloh, Paul Lawrence and Graham Lister look back at some of the stand-out moments from that fabulous history.



Breen had tall order for title

20 BREEN CLAIMS JWRC TITLE

Craig Breen faced a tall order to land the WRC Academy 2011 title. While winning his class on Rally GB was a must, he also needed to go fastest on 14 of the 17 scheduled stages to bag the bonus points available and edge Egon Kaur.

With an SWRC prize drive on offer, the reward was huge but the pressure on Breen and his Welsh co-driver Gareth Roberts immense.

And that pressure increased when the Irishman went off on the opening Great Orme test, although it wasn't long before he moved into a lead he wouldn't relinquish.

But stage defeats to Molly Taylor in the fog of Dyfnant and to title rival Kaur on the first run through Hafren on Sunday morning meant he needed to top the WRC Academy order on the rally's closing five stages.

When he beat Fredrik Ahlin to the fastest time on Myherin, he'd not only taken the WRC Academy victory but his 14th stage win on the event to draw level with Kaur in the final standings, taking the title on countback.

"When [Kaur's] time came through, I knew we had done it and it was the most incredible feeling," Breen told WRC.com. **GL**

19 EVANS PREVAILS IN WALES

Sometimes things just come together. As all headed into 2017's Rally GB, Elfyn Evans had never won a World Rally Championship event overall. He was almost exactly 10 years on from his first WRC start, yet a year on from worrying he was out of a job and being forced to watch Rally GB from the sidelines.

Plenty else seemed stacked against the Welshman for the 2017 British event. No-one other than his team-mate Sebastien Ogier had led a Rally GB in the previous five years. No British driver had won the event for 17 years, nor even led it for 16.

Yet Evans did win it, at home, on an event where it seemed



Evans shone on home event

all of Wales had come out to watch, filling every vantage point and providing audible roars to the local hero. And Evans' performance in winning was commensurate to the achievement and to his support.

Granted Evans had an advantage with soft DMACK

tyres, yet his driving lived up to it. He dominated, and his bravery in fog even took his M-Sport team-mate Ogier's breath away. And for M-Sport it was a dream event, as in addition to Evans' freshman triumph Ogier sealed his fifth WRC crown and M-Sport took the teams' title. **GK**

18 OGIER WINS ON HIS JWRC DEBUT

Frenchman Sebastien Ogier certainly burst onto the scene. On his debut in the World championship, on Rally Mexico in 2008, the Junior WRC competitor was just two years on from his first rally and this was his first event outside France. No-one it seemed knew much about this new contender.

Everyone soon learned. Ogier in JWRC won all-but-one stage on the first day, dominated the opening round and even bagged a point in the overall standings. He went on to claim that year's Junior title, and got a late-season WRC run on Rally GB, and

he immediately won the first stage.

The Citroen Junior Team followed, then promotion to the big team for 2011. But there the squad constrained him from attacking the incumbent star Sebastien Loeb.



Fresh-faced Ogier (right)

Facing this, Ogier made an audacious call to leave the dominant French marque and join the fledgling Volkswagen operation, with his first season in a Super 2000 Skoda Fabia as preparation.

Yet the call paid off big time, as from 2013 he started a run of four drivers' titles with the German manufacturer. After Volkswagen suddenly withdrew Ogier took two more crowns each with M-Sport and Toyota, bowing out of full-time WRC competition with eight championships in nine seasons. **GK**

17 WALDEGARD ROLLS BACK THE YEARS

One of Sweden's finest rally drivers of his generation, Bjorn Waldegard contested the WRC for 20 years and scored 16 wins representing four manufacturers. Until early in 2022, he held the accolade of being the oldest WRC winner after his victory on the 1990 Safari Rally.

Waldegard was the first full WRC drivers' champion in 1979 in a Ford Escort RS1800. He was also an African expert and six of his last seven WRC wins were on the Safari and Ivory Coast Rallies, with his final WRC win coming on the 1990 Safari Rally with Fred Gallagher co-driving the Toyota Celica GT4.

That year's Safari was hit by torrential rain, which created flooded roads and lots of mud. But Waldegard called on all his African experience to build a lead of nearly an hour. Time lost repairing the car cost some of that lead but the Swede kept his cool to beat Juha Kankkunen's Lancia Delta by 38 minutes.

At the time, he was aged 46 and five months and the result set him out as the oldest WRC winner for a reign of more than 20 years until Sebastian Loeb won the 2022 Monte Carlo Rally at the age of 47 years and 11 months. Sadly, Waldegard died in 2014 at the age of 70. **PL**



Waldegard held his nerve on the 1990 Safari Rally

16 MEEKE WINS VIA THE CAR PARK

Just when you think you've seen it all in the World Rally Championship, something else comes along that not even the most outlandish scriptwriter could invent.

So it was on the final stage of 2017's Rally Mexico. Kris Meeke entered the Power Stage finale in first place with 37 seconds in hand. Surely a straightforward win, the first for storied Citroen three rounds into a difficult comeback?

Not so, during the final stage Meeke's C3 flew spectacularly through a hedge. It looked a disaster, but somehow a fully operational machine emerged from the dust, now in the car park on the outside of the course.

Yet Meeke had another problem. He was now disorientated, and initially



Meeke regained the road...

proceeded away from the stage route rather than towards it. That meant we had the bizarre sight of Meeke's high-tech WRC car wandering apparently aimlessly around modest parked road-going hatchbacks, as his time advantage agonisingly ticked down.

But Meeke eventually got his bearings and about turned back into the right direction, and after some weaving between the parked cars he found a gap in the hedge and returned to the course. He made the finish still in first, having lost only 24s of his advantage. **GK**

15 LOEB: THE INCREDIBLE MACHINE

Sebastien Loeb had already won the WRC twice when he arrived in Cyprus for the 12th round of the 2006 season.

And he left Limassol with a 35-point margin over Marcus Gronholm having notched up his eighth win of the campaign in his privateer Citroen Xsara.

But Loeb didn't make it to the next event in Turkey after busting his arm falling from his bike back home in Switzerland.

Colin McRae took over Loeb's Kronos Racing entry in Turkey where a Gronholm win cut Loeb's title lead to 25 points. But Gronholm knew he had to win again in Australia – or at least score six points – to keep his bid for a third crown alive. However, an early off would leave him down in fifth at the finish in Perth and meant Loeb could celebrate becoming



Loeb got title when absent

World champion for a third time from a sports clinic in France, 9000 miles away.

"I woke up at 4am to watch the splits and it was a great moment when I knew I was

champion," Loeb said at the time. "I sent a text message to Marcus to thank him for the competition. He answered that it was fair and I deserved this title." **GL**

14 HENRI TOIVONEN WINS 1985 RAC

The name of Henri Toivonen will forever be linked with the Lancia Delta S4, a car conceived and built at the height of Group B madness.

Toivonen's first WRC win came on the 1980 RAC Rally in a Sunbeam Lotus but five years later he was back in the UK forests for the debut rally for the monstrous S4.

It was supercharged and turbocharged, had 500bhp on tap and could do 0-60mph in 2.3 seconds on gravel. It was a violent and brutal machine but Toivonen mastered it on the 1985 RAC Rally, contested over 63 special stages and 530 competitive miles.

After nine-and-a-half hours of driving this monster through the forests of England, Scotland and Wales, Toivonen beat team-



Toivonen was in his own class

mate Markku Alen by nearly a minute

Such was their pace that only two other cars finished within half an hour. Henri had battled with Alen and the Metro 6R4 of Tony Pond and moved into the lead in the Scottish borders.

Later, co-driver Neil Wilson talked about struggling to

focus on the road ahead as the S4 launched away from stage starts.

Henri did just five rallies in the S4: he won two and retired from three. The final one was Corsica in May 1986 when, three months short of his 30th birthday, he died along with co-driver Sergio Cresto. **PL**

13 MOUTON MAKES HISTORY IN 1981

Michele Mouton made rallying history when she won the 1981 Rallye Sanremo, fending off Henri Toivonen and Ari Vatanen to score the first WRC victory for a female driver.

The French ace remains the only female driver so far to have won a round of the WRC and she won four rounds in total with Audi, one in 1981 and three in '82 when she was runner-up in the championship to Walter Rohrl.

Mouton was a class winner at Le Mans in 1975 in a French-built Moynet prototype but really made her name in rallying in the late 1970s. She was shocked to get the call from Audi offering her a WRC programme in a Quattro for 1981 but repaid Audi's faith with some sensational



Mouton claimed Sanremo

performances at the wheel of ever-more-powerful Group B monsters.

She quickly showed that she deserved the drive on merit and won stages on the second round of the '81 WRC season, Rally of Portugal, before scoring the landmark Sanremo victory on Sanremo

in October. Over 460 competitive miles in 59 special stages on gravel and asphalt, she was peerless.

Mouton inspired a generation of females in rallying but, more than anything, wanted to be a match for the quickest men and she surely was. **PL**

WRC TOP 20

12 SOLBERG WORKS HIS WAY INTO THE HEARTS OF THE FANS

Petter Solberg always talked like a World champion, always looked like one and, armed with a Subaru Impreza WRC, became one in 2003. With Welsh wingman Phil Mills sitting on the right-hand side of the all-blue Banbury-built beast, Solberg triumphed four times that season with his victory on the winner-takes-all Rally GB the most important of all. By beating Sebastien Loeb into second place, Solberg took the crown

by a single point. But it was on French soil – Corsican Tarmac to be precise – where Solberg’s title dream took a turn for the better. Eventually. The Norwegian smashed up his Impreza in shakedown to the point that making the start was in considerable doubt until the Prodrive mechanics turned into superheroes to fix the wrecked S9. Solberg made the start, won the rally and, two events later, became



Solberg won four times in '03

World champion in Wales, the setting of his maiden WRC victory just one year earlier. Tommi Makinen, his then team-mate and competing for the final time before retiring with four World titles, was the first to congratulate the then 28-year-old. “I jumped into his arms – I was so happy and so grateful to him,” Solberg would recall in a WRC.com interview published last year. **GL**



Solberg flew on the way to his WRC title



Rovanpera left the rest in his smoke in 2022

11 ROVANPERA BECOMES THE YOUNGEST WRC TITLE WINNER

Rallying is in Kalle Rovanperä's blood and in his genes. The Jyväskylä-born driver, son of one-time round winner Harri, he began competing before he was 15 years old in Latvia, where the licence requirements are less stringent. He rallied in Italy and in Finland before tackling some European rounds. Later that same season, he made his WRC debut in Britain in 2017 in a Ford Fiesta R5. Two seasons in an R5 Skoda prepared him for his step up to the top-flight in a Toyota in 2020. He was a winner in season two on his way to



fourth in the standings. Rovanperä truly came of age this year. Fourth in the opening Monte Carlo round didn't really point at what was to come: it was a campaign of dominance. Five wins from the next six events meant the Yaris driver could control the pace over

the remaining rounds and the silverware was locked away following yet another win in New Zealand. The performance of the now-22-year-old driver brought some lofty comparisons from his team boss Jari-Matti Latvala, too. “It was when [Sebastien] Ogier was starting his domination in the Volkswagen team,” said the team patron. “The performance Kalle is making is feeling the same – but to be doing this [at his age] is something really special. We didn't see this kind of performance from a driver so young before.” **MJ**

10 INTRODUCTION OF THE WR CAR REGULATIONS

While the Group A cars that were introduced into the World Rally Championship in 1987 following the demise of Group B might have been something of an anathema to fans who were move used to the fire-breathing monsters that had gone before, they did open the net wider for those firms who wanted to take part. However, because of the production-based nature of the rules, firms had to produce homologation specials to allow

their products into the WRC, which was always a burden in terms of finance. The rules had a huge overhaul for the 1997 season, with many of the shackles removed by the introduction of the World Rally Car formula. Manufacturers could introduce four-wheel-drive machines that didn't feature it in the road-going range. A turbo could also be added where there might not have been one previously. There were several other rule

tweaks to fling the door wide open to as many potential entrants as possible. The World Rally Car rules were unchanged for 14 seasons before they were tweaked to allow smaller models and all were fitted with 1.6-litre turbocharged engines and there was an increase in power for 2017 but the rule set remained based on the original concept, making it one of the most successful set of rally regulations in the history of the sport. **MJ**



World Rally Car came on stream in the 1997 season



Monte Carlo in 2022 was the starting point

9 M-SPORT'S RECORD-BREAKING POINTS RUN

Carlos Sainz and Colin McRae finishing third and fourth respectively on the 2002 Monte Carlo Rally, in a pair of Ford Focus RS cars, may not strike as a prime candidate for one of the World Rally Championship's top moments. But something special started then. That was the point that M-Sport

began its run of consecutive WRC points finishes, a run that continues today, more than 20 years on, and totals some 281 events. Consider too that this is rallying, where things to hit and end your rally are pretty much always close at hand. Yet even to score in 281 circuit races in a row – with super-

smooth Tarmac and vast runoff areas – would be quite the achievement. And, of course, in this time Malcolm Wilson's hardy M-Sport outfit has been much more than a finisher. It's taken two drivers' World titles, three manufacturers' crowns and 51 wins. And some of rallying's

most legendary names have contributed: Sainz and McRae we've mentioned, but you can add Sebastien Ogier, Sebastien Loeb, Marcus Gronholm, Ott Tanak and many others. Drivers and manufacturers have come and gone over the past two decades, but M-Sport being there at the end is a constant. **GK**

8 VATANEN TAKES THE TITLE IN AN ESCORT AS A PRIVATEER

Finnish fan favourite Ari Vatanen had a long and successful career as a factory Ford driver, which stretched back to the 1975 season.

He was a master of the Ford Escort RS1800 and helped the Blue Oval to the manufacturers' crown in 1979 alongside team-mate (and overall champion) Bjorn Waldegard. However, there was a bombshell on the horizon: Ford decided to step down from competition, preferring instead to develop the Mk3 version of the Escort, the stillborn Ford Escort RS 1700T.

Ford had provided some assistance to David Sutton Motorsport during the

1979 campaign and it gave its blessing for Sutton to continue in 1980, with backing from Rothmans.

He was able to purchase all of Ford's equipment at a knock-down rate and he picked up Vatanen and co-driver David Richards too.

While Walter Rohrl took the drivers' title in that 1980 season, Vatanen and Richards took a maiden win in that year, and it all came together perfectly for the 1981 season.

Three victories helped Vatanen to claim the crown, and it was (until Kronos in 2006) the only triumph for a non-works car in the WRC. **MJ**



Vatanen/Richards won in 1981



Tommi Makinen went from despair to the title glory



Moya vents his frustration on the broken Toyota

7 RALLY GB SHOWDOWN: MAKINEN WINS, SAINZ'S DRAMA

Going in to the final round of the 1998 WRC, Rally GB, Tommi Makinen headed Carlos Sainz by just two points after a year of fierce competition.

However, for Makinen in the works Mitsubishi Lancer E5 there was an early nightmare on the spectator stage at Millbrook when oil was dropped in the historic rally and

the works Mitsubishi Lancer E5 slid wide on a corner. Contact with a large concrete block took a rear wheel off the Mitsubishi and, though Tommi tried to carry on, his rally was over.

That left Sainz needing only fourth place in his Toyota Corolla to win his third title and the dejected Makinen wanted to

go home. However, the team persuaded him to stay, and no-one could believe how the last stage of the rally played out.

In Margam Park in South Wales Sainz was on target to take the title as he started the final stage. But, incredibly, the Toyota's engine failed with little more than a mile to run

and Sainz ground to a halt.

TV pictures of co-driver Luis Moya venting his frustration by throwing his crash helmet through the Corolla's rear window made the headlines and, suddenly, an incredulous Makinen was champion in what would be the third of his four straight titles. **PL**

6 HYBRID POWER INTRODUCED

Sebastien Loeb is quite used to rewriting the record books in the World Rally Championship. The mighty Frenchman, a nine-time title victor, stamped his name all over another achievement at the very start of 2022 when he powered his M-Sport Puma Rally1 car to victory in Monte Carlo.

It was the then-47-year-old's 80th WRC victory but he'd had something brand new to contend with: it was the first rally win using a hybrid car.

The initiative was driven by the sport's governing body, the FIA, and all the manufacturer entries were compelled to use the system. The 100kW of extra power (which is reportedly worth 134bhp of grunt) was added to supplement the 1.6-litre

turbocharged petrol-engine powerplant, which has been in use since 2011. That meant, at peak performance, the output of a top-flight WRC machine could be boosted to more than 500bhp in total.

The cars regenerate power under braking and then it is deployed when the driver next accelerates. The system remains active throughout the entire stage and there are three different engine maps to cope with the different conditions that drivers might encounter.

Despite the complexity of the new systems, the switch to electrically boosted power was remarkably trouble-free for the leading squads and the attention remained firmly focused on that which was happening on the stages. **MJ**



WRC had a new toy for 2022

5 CHAMPIONS WHO WERE NEVER CROWNED

When Kalle Rovanner clinched the World Rally Championship back in October, he became the seventh Finn to win the sport's top prize.

He could have been the eighth had Markku Alen's reign lasted a whole lot longer than the 11 days it did back in 1986.

After winning Rallye Sanremo, Alen was in the driving seat to

become World champion and hand his shattered Lancia team, still reeling from Henri Toivonen and Sergio Cresto's deaths earlier in the season, some solace.

But having watched their man take victory, the partisan Italian scrutineers chucked out the chasing Peugeots for an apparent sideskirt irregularity,

much to the disdain of the governing body in Paris, who would uphold Peugeot's subsequent appeal, then get nasty by annulling the Sanremo results. Ouch.

Alen could have been a champion before had the drivers' title been awarded in 1978 when he headed what was then the FIA Rally Cup for

Drivers. But timing is everything in motorsport with the first World champion driver not crowned until 1979 when Bjorn Waledegard topped the ranking. Sandro Munari was the only other non-World champion, the Italian lifting the FIA Rally Cup for Drivers in 1977, beating Waldegard by a point. **GL**



Alen on the Olympus Rally

WRC TOP 20



The Audi Quattro started a rallying revolution in 1981

4 FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE INTRODUCED

To this day mere mention of the Audi Quattro to any rally fan elicits a visceral reaction like no other machine does. Yet there is more than pulse quickening to this poster car of the inimitable Group B era. It also changed the game in world rallying.

For a long time four-wheel drive was not permitted in the World Rally Championship, and even so no volume manufacturer produced such a car. From 1979 the rules were

rewritten to allow four-wheel drive, yet manufacturers still believed it was too complex and heavy to use in WRC.

But Audi – which at this point had little sporting pedigree – identified WRC as perfect to promote its all-wheel-drive wares. Its Quattro was unveiled at 1980's Geneva Motor Show and rally testing started mid-year. The Quattro got an early-1981 debut victory on the Janner Rallye then its first WRC win

quickly followed in the Swedish Rally's snow.

And the following year the Quattro, combined with new Group B rules, became a monster. In 1982 it got seven World Rally wins and the manufacturers' title. In the following two years it took drivers to the World crown. And four-wheel drive for WRC frontrunners became as standard as putting air in your tyres. **GK**

3 WHEN GROUP B WAS OUTLAWED

March 5, 1986 was a dark day for the WRC. On the opening stage of Rally of Portugal Joaquim Santos lost control of his Ford RS200 and ploughed into spectators standing by the road. More than 30 were injured while three never made it home.

Two months later, Henri Toivonen and co-driver Sergio Cresto, third on that fateful Lagoa Azul stage, burned to death when their Lancia Delta S4 plunged down a Corsican

ravine and exploded.

Enough, according to then FISA (FIA) president Jean-Marie Balestre, was enough. Within hours of Toivonen and Cresto dying, Group B was done with the tragic 1986 season its last.

Rallying's super-charged and super-risky period would soon be over but not before Marc Surer's co-driver Michel Wyder died when their RS200 was torn apart after smashing into trees on Germany's

Rallye Hessen.

A badly injured Surer was thrown clear of the carnage but Wyder didn't make it out of the burning wreckage.

Toivonen and Cresto died a year to the day that Attilio Bettega suffered fatal head injuries when his Lancia 037 struck a tree in Corsica. That summer, Ari Vatanen was seriously injured crashing his Peugeot 205 T16 in Argentina. Frightening times. **GL**



The Group B monsters were a dangerous weapon

2 BURNS WINS THE WRC



Third place on Rally GB sealed the deal for Burns

When Richard Burns won the 2001 World Rally Championship, he became the first and only English driver ever to do so. His record remains intact.

After three years with Mitsubishi, Burns returned to Subaru in 1999 but it was 2001 that proved to be his glory season. Though he scored no points in the two openers in Monte Carlo and Sweden, Burns then started a run of strong results as he battled into contention with Colin McRae and Tommi Makinen.

His only win of the year came in New Zealand and second place in Australia took him close to series leader McRae to set up a four-way decider, also involving Carlos Sainz, on Rally GB in November.

Ultimately, the other three all retired from the event though McRae set a ferocious pace before rolling out spectacularly on Friday morning. Makinen was already out on the event's first forest stage and Sainz retired on Saturday after going off.

Through it all, Burns stayed calm and third place was enough to give him his title. Tragically, there would not be any more, as two years later he was diagnosed with a brain tumour that cruelly took his life in November 2005 at the age of just 34. He was a supreme talent who deserved more time at the top of the sport. **PL**

1 KING COLIN CONQUERS THE WRC SUMMIT



McRae imposed himself in the minds of WRC fans



Co-driver Derek Ringer and Colin McRae celebrate the title at Chester Racecourse

Other rally drivers wanted to be him and millions of game-playing teens wanted to be like him. Colin McRae bestrode the World Rally Championship for more than a decade.

The lad from Lanark's path to the summit of motorsport was written in the stars. Son of British Rally title winner Jimmy, his route started with a Vauxhall Nova and quickly propelled him through the UK rallying scene and into the Subaru World Rally Team in 1993. Two years later, he stood on top of the world at Chester Racecourse after a tempestuous battle with his

highly experienced team-mate Carlos Sainz.

Only two of his 25 WRC victories came during that title winning campaign. He was more successful in his final two seasons at Subaru with three and four victories in 1996 and 1997, but the outright crown eluded him.

His final year with the Japanese marque was 1998, the same year when the top-selling video game Colin McRae Rally was unleashed on the world, which brought the WRC and the McRae into the living rooms of a whole new generation of fans.

His full-time ride in the WRC

came to an end in 2003 after a season with Citroen and, while there were a couple of cameos for Skoda Motorsport and the Kronos team in a Citroen, that was the last that the top-flight would see of him before his death in a helicopter accident in 2007. It was shortly before he was reportedly due to test a Subaru in anticipation of a full-time comeback in 2008.

McRae's star burned brightly, and the enduring image is of the Scotsman pushing hard at every turn. It is one that is seared on the minds of fans across the world – and there were millions. **MJ**



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COLUMNIST

WILL ASPIN



The 18-year-old is looking ahead with optimism after a varied freshman year in Porsche Carrera Cup

Photos: Porsche Motorsport GB, Jakob Ebrey, Dan Bathie



Aspin learned a lot in Porsches



Aspin took early season victory at Brands Hatch

I had my first season in Porsche Carrera Cup GB this year, with Team Parker Racing, and it started very well. We started confidently and were getting the results we wanted to and, if not, we were getting better. At the year's midpoint and towards the end it got a bit disappointing though. I was making mistakes, and it was probably one of my least lucky seasons in racing. But I know I can be better next year.

The Carrera Cup car was brand new to me, having previously raced in Ginetta GT5 Challenge where I finished third in 2021's championship. Carrera Cup is one of the hardest championships on the British Touring Car package, and I accepted that, but it was a difficult season.

I have to move on from it and look forward to 2023. I can take what I've learned this year, which is a lot: for example how I composed myself, how to drive the car properly and understanding it towards the end of the season. I'm not going to be messing around next year and I'm going to go for the title.

It was a big step up from Ginetta GT5, especially with the power, but the challenge was more that the driving technique is completely different. With the Ginetta you send the speed in, carry the minimum through the corner, and you're picking up the throttle to balance the car throughout the corner.

The Cup car is a completely opposite technique. You're driving the car in on the brake, stopping it, and waiting until you get to that point where you see the exit, the steering

wheel is straight, and you can just floor the throttle. It is quite hard to change your habits, but we're getting there every time we get in the car. It is such a hard beast to tame but once you get it, you get it.

My highlight of the season was to win in the Pro-Am class at Brands Hatch Indy. That was good because straight away we were at the back of the leading pack of the frontrunning Pro cars and able to follow them. Silverstone's race two was a highlight as well, because it was a good race, and we went from 16th on the grid to ninth.

A low point probably was Snetterton. We didn't finish either race, and had good pace in practice on Friday. At Thruxton too we were really quick in practice, and we were looking at fighting for overall pole or a top five in qualifying, but we didn't get it, so that weekend was pretty disappointing. And my final low point was the last round, at the



Aspin is determined to fight at the front in 2023

Brands GP circuit, because we had the chance of finishing third in the Pro-Am championship and third in the Rookies table. But unfortunately we got taken out by another competitor in race one and then race two didn't go to plan.

Team Parker, all the mechanics and I all get on so well. I can't thank Isabella Devile, my number one, enough, and it's such an amazing team and such a lovely family, so I look forward to working with them again for next year if we can get everything agreed. The team has been around for a while, so it knows everything and has got all the data and equipment to make the car go fast and it knows how to win.

Working with I2020 Carrera Cup GB champion Harry King as coach has been really, really helpful; one of the reasons I've learned so much is because of him. I did a Porsche Carrera Cup Benelux round at Assen and it was helpful to have him as a direct team-mate, especially being able to follow him out on track. I was able to say, 'OK, he's done that, then I'll just do it the next lap', and then coming off the track and going through the data.

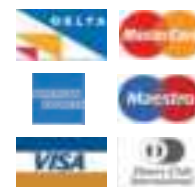
My aim for next year is to return to Carrera Cup GB. Over the winter I'll be concentrating on my fitness and getting fit to get back in the car, be on top of it, and on it. I'll spend time on the sim as it keeps you focused and keeps the technique there. Finally, I'll just fine-tune everything that we did last year and make it better, which should make me better as a driver as well. Then we can make sure we're at the top of the Pro-Ams or at the front overall.

"I'm not going to be messing around next year and I'm going for the title"

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WHAT'S ON

BOOK REVIEW

British GT official 2022 season review

The British GT championship has grown sharply in prominence in recent times, and it has just made its next step by publishing its first-ever official season review. It's a 100-page bookazine edited by Robert Ladbrook, formerly of this parish and a fixture in the British GT paddock.

It's therefore an authoritative work, as well as lively and engaging, and Ladbrook's succeeded in making it accessible for a wide audience – even doing a fine job explaining Balance of Performance clearly and succinctly – while offering plenty for the expert fan to get their teeth into. It's also attractively designed with plenty

of high-quality photography.

It starts with a primer on the championship, then there's an outline of the 2022 season's cars and drivers – the latter even includes two who only did practice and qualifying in the season opener...

Then we have an in-depth report on every race from 2022, both in the GT3 and GT4 contests.

Then there are feature articles on 2022's GT3 and GT4 champions, both overall and from the classes.

It's out now, priced at £20 and you can buy a copy from British GT's online shop at: britishgtmerchandise.com. It would make a fine Christmas present for the British GT fan in your life.

Graham Keilloh

British GT is in review



TV GUIDE



The Belgian Grand Prix from '95 will be on Sky Sports F1

Starting early this (Thursday) morning at 0700hrs, Sky Sports F1 for the next couple of days shows a succession of races in full from recent seasons.

Then on Saturday afternoon the channel steps it up a gear with a series of classic races shown with chief protagonists, and/or the Sky team, watching along. It starts at 1330hrs with 1999's sensational European Grand Prix, and we also get Hungary in 2006 and 1997, Canada in 2011, Germany and Brazil from 2019 and Spa in 1995. Come Sunday on Sky Sports

F1, Formula 2 takes over with the season-concluding Abu Dhabi round's sprint race at 1125hrs-1300hrs, followed immediately by the feature race at 1300hrs-1430hrs. Then there's a series of 'Chasing the Dream' episodes getting behind the scenes in F2. After that Abu Dhabi's 2022 action is shown all over again.

WRC Review today at 1200hrs-1300hrs on BT Sport 3 has the best from this year's World Rally Championship season just finished.

Viaplay Xtra meanwhile has

LIVE TV

F1 ESPORTS SERIES

Brazil: Thursday, 1930hrs-2100hrs, Sky Sports F1

Abu Dhabi: Friday, 1930hrs-2100hrs, Sky Sports F1

some of the lesser-spotted motorsport forms to watch, including Icelandic Offroad Racing early tomorrow at 0800hrs-0900hrs, while in Sunday's early hours, at 0000hrs-0100hrs, there is a Tour European Rally season review.

Graham Keilloh

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Photographs must be of a good quality and please send no more than three images

ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S FAVOURITE OF THE WEEK!



Mike Griffin was brave to take this shot of a Mini on the recent HERO LeJog showdown



A Shadow man, taken by Dean Chilvers



More from Dean Chilvers at the Dubai GP Revival



David Harbey's pic of the EnduroKa encounter



Gary Hill snapped this poorly Ka

NEXT EDITION

OUT THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22

WE ANSWER THE BIG QUESTIONS OF THE F1 SEASON



Looking back on a dramatic campaign in 2022

HOW ROVANPERA RIPPED UP THE WRC RECORD BOOKS

MN reflects on the World Rally Championship contest



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